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BOX PATENT APPLICATION

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING BY "EXPRESS MAIL"

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Applicant(s) : Low, et al.
For : A MESSAGE PROCESSING SYSTEM
Attorney : John M. Carson
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I hereby certify that the accompanying

Transmittal letter;
International Application as published (with International Search Report);
Form PCT/IB/308;
Preliminary Amendment in 5 pages, including abstract on one page;
2 sheets of drawings;
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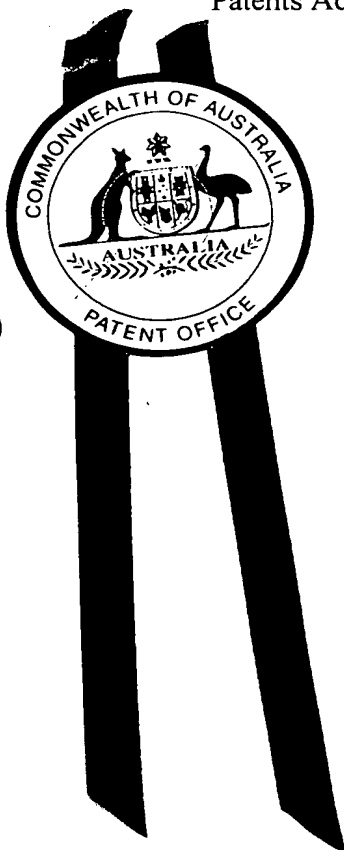
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I, ANNA MAIJA EVERETT, ACTING TEAM LEADER EXAMINATION SUPPORT & SALES hereby certify that annexed is a true copy of the Provisional specification in connection with Application No. PQ 0302 for a patent by SYDNEY GORDON LOW and WILLIAM DENNIS WANG filed on 12 May 1999.

I further certify that the above application is now proceeding in the name of SHARINGA NETWORKS INC. pursuant to the provisions of Section 113 of the Patents Act 1990.



WITNESS my hand this
Twenty-sixth day of May 2000

A. M. Everett.

ANNA MAIJA EVERETT
ACTING TEAM LEADER
EXAMINATION SUPPORT & SALES

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Sharinga Networks Inc.

~~SYDNEY GORDON LOW~~ and

~~WILLIAM DENNIS WANG~~

A U S T R A L I A

Patents Act 1990

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION

for the invention entitled:

"A MESSAGE PROCESSING SYSTEM"

The invention is described in the following statement:



A MESSAGE PROCESSING SYSTEM

5 The present invention relates to a message handling process and a message processing system, which may be used to deal with unsolicited and unapproved electronic messages.

Electronic messaging, particularly the use of e-mail over the Internet, has been enthusiastically adopted by large numbers of people, who have taken advantage of the inherent
10 efficiencies and convenience of electronic messaging. One unfortunate consequence of Internet e-mail however has been the proliferation of unsolicited and unwanted e-mail messages, often referred to as "spam", which people receive. Various methods have been developed to restrict or prevent spam from reaching intended recipients. The methods have included both technical and legal measures which to date have met with mixed results. None have eliminated the
15 problem of spam, nor prevented "spammers" from sending their messages and seeking to subvert the measures.

One of the technical measures includes applying a spam filter which processes an incoming message to determine whether it should be forwarded to the recipient or not. The
20 disadvantage associated with such filters is that inevitably useful messages for the recipient are inadvertently filtered and never received.

It is desired to provide a method and system which provides a useful alternative or which allows management of unsolicited messages without seeking to simply restrict or filter
25 incoming messages.

The present invention relates to a message handling process, including:
determining if a message is approved for the recipient of the message;
processing the message for subsequent viewing by the recipient if said message is
30 approved; and
notifying the recipient and storing said message if said message is not approved.

Advantageously, a recipient is able to determine the criteria used to determine if said message is approved. The criteria may be that the sender of the message is on a stored approved list for the recipient.

5 Preferably after said notifying step, the method includes allowing said recipient to view the unapproved message and/or allowing said recipient to change said criteria. For instance, the recipient may select to add the sender to said approved list. The stored unapproved messages which are not read may be deleted, and the sender may be notified accordingly.

10

The present invention also provides a message processing system, including:
means for determining if a message is approved for the recipient of the message;
means for processing the message for subsequent viewing by the recipient if said message is approved; and
15 means for notifying the recipient and storing said message if said message is not approved.

The present invention also provides a message manager stored on a computer readable storage medium, including:

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code for determining if a message is approved for the recipient of the message;
code for processing the message for subsequent viewing by the recipient if said message is approved; and
code for notifying the recipient and storing said message if said message is not approved.

25

A preferred embodiment of the present invention is hereinafter described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Figure 1 is a block diagram of a preferred embodiment of a message processing system connected to a communications network; and

30

Figure 2 is a flow diagram of the message handling process executed by the message processing system.

A message processing system 2, as shown in Figure 1, is provided by a computer which may be a Unix server. The server includes standard web server software 8 and e-mail server software 12 so that the server 2 can operate as a web server and can also operate as an e-mail server, i.e. a standard POP3/SMTP/IMAP e-mail server. The system 2 also includes
5 e-mail manager software 10 stored on the server which includes program code and database code that establishes a database on the server 2. The code of the manager 10 causes the system to execute the message handling steps described below. Although shown on one machine, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that software components 8, 10 and 12 of the system 2 can be distributed amongst a number of machines in different locations, provided
10 the components 8, 10 and 12 can communicate with one another, as shown in Figure 1.

A user of the system 2 is able to access the system 2 via a communications network 4 using a standard computer 6 with a web browser. The communications network 4 may be, for example, the Internet or a LAN. For instance, the system 2 may be part of a corporate
15 intranet, and act as a gateway for the intranet to the Internet. The system 2 may also be controlled by a service provider simply providing an e-mail service via the Internet. The service provider can then service any users which can connect via the Internet, including the users of corporate networks. Users, including companies, which use the system are registered and identified as being users by the e-mail manager 10. All e-mails for the users are then
20 directed to the system 2.

The message handling method executed by the system 2, and in particular the manager 10, is shown in Figure 2. For incoming e-mails received by the system 2 for the users, at step 14, the manager 10 determines, at step 16, whether the e-mail message is approved. Approval
25 of an e-mail message can be based on a number of criteria, with the simplest being whether the sender of the message is on a list of approved senders for the intended recipient that is stored on the database of the e-mail manager 10. If the message is approved at step 16, a determination is made at step 17 as to whether the recipient collects e-mail messages from the e-mail server 12 directly. If so, the message is stored on the server 12 at step 20 for retrieval
30 from the e-mail server 12 in the normal manner. Otherwise the e-mail server 12 forwards the message to the recipient's e-mail server at step 22 via the communications network 4.

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If it is determined at step 16 that the message is not approved, then the system 2 notifies the recipient, at step 18, that it has disallowed a received message for the recipient. The recipient can be notified by a number of communications methods, such as by e-mail or by a telephone call over the network 4. On receipt of the notification at step 18, the recipient 5 can direct their web browser of the machine 6 to the web server 8 and view a list of disallowed messages. From the list, the user can execute a number of actions, such as read the message, select a sender of a message to be added to the approved list stored by the manager 10 or simply delete messages.

10 At step 18, the sender of an e-mail that has been disallowed by the system 2 is notified by e-mail that their message has been held in a pending mailbox because they were not on the recipient's list of authorised e-mail senders. The sender is also informed by e-mail that if they wish to ensure that the recipient reads the e-mail, the sender should use other means, such as telephone, to inform the recipient that they have been sent an e-mail and ask that the recipient 15 add the sender's e-mail address to the recipient's list of authorised senders.

The manager 10 uses the e-mail server 12 to send the notifications at step 18 by e-mail, and the e-mail for the recipient includes a URL for the web server 8. A recipient can then respond to the notification by selecting the URL and pointing the browser to the web 20 server 8. The manager 10 determines at step 24, after a predetermined period of time, whether or not the recipient has ignored the notification sent by e-mail. If the notification is ignored, the system 2 sends a return e-mail, at step 26, notifying the sender that the sent message has not been the read by the recipient. The message is then deleted at step 30.

25 If the recipient responds to the e-mail notification so as to direct the recipient's browser to the system 2, the browser communicates with the web server 8 which sends a web page, designated by the URL. The web page displays a list of messages not approved by the manager 10 with the recently sent message being highlighted or selected. The e-mail manager 10 then determines at step 28 whether the recipient has selected on the web page an option to 30 add the sender of the highlighted message to the approved list maintained by the manager 10. If not, operation of the manager 10 proceeds to step 32, otherwise the manager 10 will update

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the recipient's approved list to add the sender, at step 34, and then proceed to step 32. At step 32, the e-mail manager 10 determines whether the recipient has chosen an option on the web page to read the highlighted message, and if not, the message is deleted at step 30. Otherwise, the message is displayed at step 36 for the recipient's browser. When the recipient has finished displaying the message and closes it, the manager 10 then deletes the message at step 30. An alternative to step 30 is to store or save the message automatically, or at the request of the recipient, instead of deleting the message.

The above system 2 and management method are particularly advantageous as they provide users with the capability to manage unsolicited or unapproved e-mail messages without having the messages inadvertently removed by a message filter. The management facilities provided by the system 2 are web browser based, and provides significant additional management services to users of browser based e-mail services, such as those provided by Hotmail and Yahoo.

Many modifications will be apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the scope of the present invention as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

DATED this 12th day of May, 1999

~~SYDNEY GORDON LOW~~ and *Sharinga Networks Inc.*
~~WILLIAM DENNIS WANG~~

By their Patent Attorneys

DAVIES COLLISON CAVE



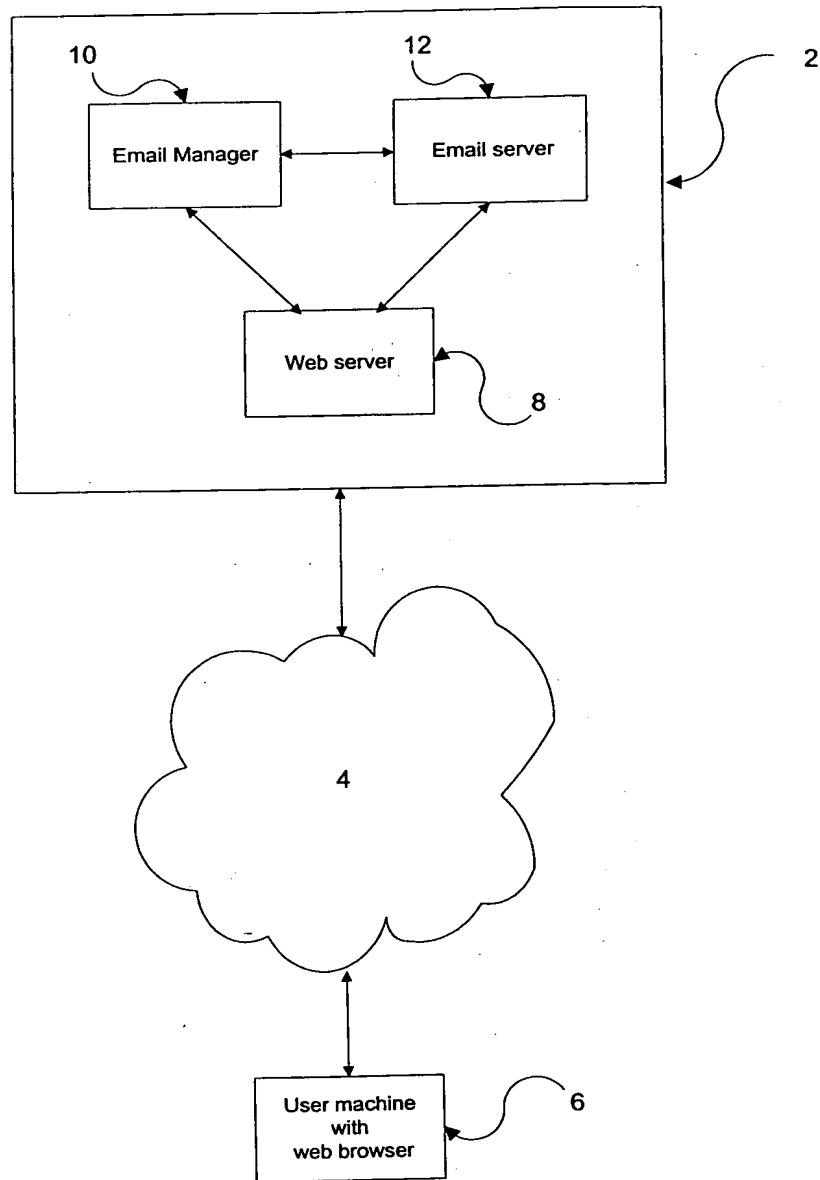


Figure 1

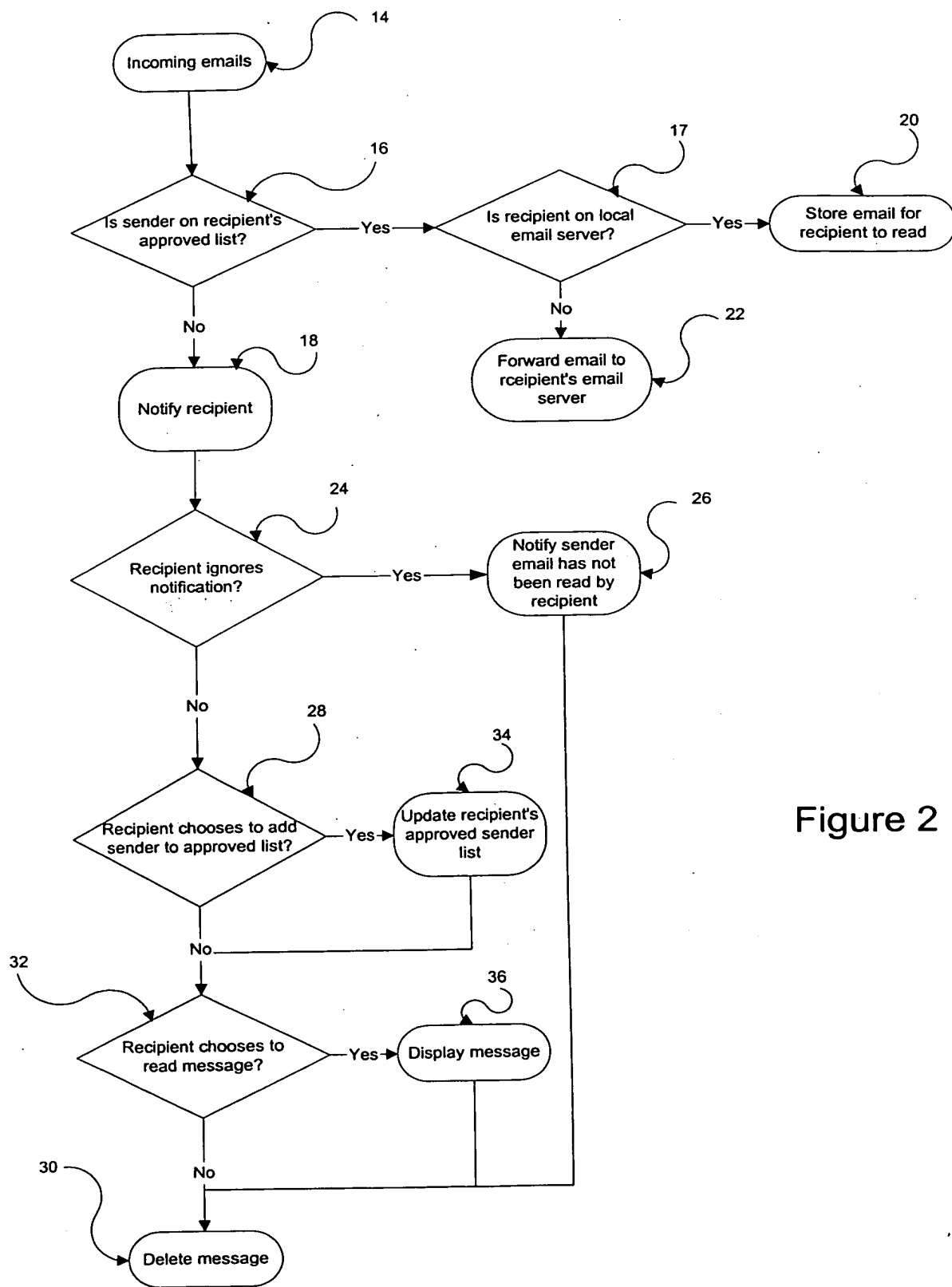


Figure 2

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